*“Do we have to be a great person to be a good leader?”*

*-Chinese and Western approaches to leadership.*

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| **Module Code** | | *N/A* | |  | **Program Level** | MBA; graduate level |
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| **Target Students** | | *MBA* | |  | **Total Credits** | 1 |
| **Semesters** | | *Spring Semester 2026* | |  | **Prerequisites** | *N/A* |
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| **Instructor** | | *Alexis Y. LAVIS* | |  | **E-mail** | *alexis.lavis@ruc.edu.cn* |
| **Office Location** | | N/A | |  | **Phone** | *N/A* |
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| **Office hours/**  **Appointment Procedures** | | | *Appointment by email* | | | |
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| **Course Description** | This course offers a series of cross-disciplinary reflections on the meaning of leadership based on Western philosophical sources (Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Heidegger, and Rancière) and Chinese philosophical sources (Confucius, Sunzi, Hanfeizi, Laozi, and Zhuangzi). The general issue is to examine, based on the founding texts of our now common ways of thinking, the relationship between the practice and conditions of good leadership and the so-called “moral” qualities of a leader. In other words, what determines a “good” leader? | | | | | |
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| **Aims & Objectives** | The aim of this course is to provide a broader framework for reflection on the meaning and effectiveness of leadership practices. There is now widespread agreement that we are experiencing a leadership crisis, and many attribute this crisis to the shortcomings of contemporary leaders, particularly their moral mediocrity. However, the situation is more complex and subtle than that, and such prejudice tends to paralyze rather than stimulate leadership. It is therefore important to give students a broader perspective on the role of leaders, not only to prepare them for the challenges ahead, but also to encourage them. | | | | | |
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| **Learning Outcomes** | At the end of this course, students will have a broad and rich understanding of the different meanings of leadership, the many possibilities for best practices, and the conditions for becoming a leader in the world to come—that is, a world based on multiple philosophical legacies and put into practice in many ways. | | | | | |
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| **Grading System** | • Class Participation & In-Class Discussion 50 %• Final Paper 50 % | | | | | |

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| **Outline of Teaching Schedule** | **Lecture** | **Readings** |
| **1. March 20, 2026** | “All good leadership depends on the qualities of the leader”: but what qualities for what type of leadership? Study of the ground doctrines of Western leadership: **Plato**, **Aristotle**, and **Machiavelli** (+ detour via *The* *Bible* and its dual model of the *prophet* and the *king*). | – Cusher B.E. and Menaldo M. A. (2021). *Philosophy and Leadership. Three Classical Models and Cases*. New York: Routledge. |
| **2. March 27, 2026** | Moral elevation and leadership: the paradigmatic but paradoxical case of **Confucianism**. | – Ames, R. T. (1999). *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*. New York: Ballantine Books (Penguin Random House)  – Yao, Xinzhong (2000). *An Introduction to Confucianism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. |
| **3. April 3, 2026** | Strategy and Leadership in **Sunzi**: Command, Victory, and Situation. | – Ames, R. T. (1993). *Sun-tzu: The Art of Warfare: The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-chʻüeh-shan Texts*. New York: Ballantine Books.  – Tung, R. L. (2001), “Strategic Management Thought in East Asia”, in Warner M., *Comparative Management: Critical Perspectives on Business and Management*, vol. 3, New York: Routledge |
| **4. April 10, 2026** | “Every good leader must disappear”: the strange lesson of **Hanfeizi** and the **Daoists**. | – *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings*. Translated by Watson, B. New York: Columbia University Press. 1964.  – *Tao Te Ching*, translated by Lau, D. C., Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1989 (+Penguin Boks version 1963)  – Brook Z. (2020), *Zhuangzi: The Complete Writings*, Indianapolis: Hackett. |
| **5. April 17, 2026** | How can leadership be freed from both the myth of the “Great Person” and the “algorithmic device”? Reflections on democratic issues (J. Rancière) and technological risks (M. Heidegger). | – Jacques Rancière (2014) *Hatred of Democracy*, translated by Corcoran S. London: Verso.  – Martin Heidegger (1977) *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by Lovitt W. New York: Garland Publishing. |
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| **Method of Class Teaching** | The course will be conducted online. The instructor will analyze various issues and sources related to the relationship between a leader’s moral qualities and good leadership. The course will be divided into several thematic sessions, each of which will include time for discussion and questions. | |
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| **Additional Reading List Recommended** | – Terry L. Price (2008) *Leadership Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.  – Spencer Shaw (2023) *The Philosophy of Authentic Leadership*. Cham: Springer  – Antonio Marturano (2024) *Philosophy and Leadership*. New York: Routledge.  – Morgen Witzel (oct 2012): “The Leadership Philosophy of Han Fei”, *Asia Pacific Business Review*, vol. 18, No 4, p. 489-503.  – Haina Zhang , André M. Everett , Graham Elkin & Malcolm H. Cone (oct 2012): “Authentic leadership theory development: theorizing on Chinese philosophy”, *Asia Pacific Business Review*, vol. 18, No 4, p. 587-605. | |
| **Bio** | Alexis Y. Lavis received his PhD from University of Normandy and obtained the agrégation in philosophy from the Sorbonne and the ministry of education and research. He is presently Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy in Renmin University of China (Beijing). He was previously lecturer in philosophy and Asian studies in Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po); lecturer in History of Philosophy and Comparative Philosophy in University of Normandy. His research interests cover Indian and Chinese Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, History of Western Philosophy, Phenomenology and Linguistics (French, English, German, Latin, Ancient Greek, Sanskrit, modern and ancient Chinese). His publications include the translation (Sanskrit to French) and commentary of the Śāntideva’s *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (2018), two studies on the relationship between Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in China (2010, 2013); some translations of Chinese texts and Sanskrit; and recently an epistemological and comparative analysis of the concept of “Unforeseen” (2021). He is editorial director of collection “Asian Studies” (Cerf Publishing House), program director (on “Comparative Rituality”) at the Collège International de Philosophie (CIPh), member/researcher of the Husserl Archives-Paris of the French Asian Society, and of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy (ISCP). | |